

## The Teacher's Prologue

Upon my hand is a task I set  
to summarize a bookish text

And make clearer the history from which is sprung  
the tales of one of Christ's good sons

This act I welcome with not much flair  
as a common mind I harbor there

I fetter myself out of servitude  
with risk of coming off absurd

I do so and appeal for your empathy –  
my brain has fallen as from a tree

I offer you this simple 'lude,  
you of greater pulchritude

And hope you glean from my reward  
a stronger insight much further toward

The knowing of things of such importance  
as that which is needed for your comportment

I do so alongside the singing of song  
with presumption that you'll take kindly to singing along

I do so with reminders that my example may be folly  
but someone must take such a small chance, by golly

Someone must show that it's all right to tell stories  
as imperfect as weasels and damsels and glory

As flawed as can be and as right as His word  
yet both at the same time? Now that IS absurd.

## The Teacher's Tale

To sum up this part of England's past politic  
I begin with what happened in one thousand sixty-six

I throw into discussion a triple inheritance of throne  
after Edward was dead and his body was bone

Which resulted in slaughter so sanguine, so wild  
and ultimately ended in French rule of the Isle

Whereby all of the land mass and animals on it  
were owned by a William so sorely admonished

His centralization of power was bleak  
and continued with his two sons until Stephen, the meek

Finally, Henry the Second ruled well –  
“Plantagenet” ended Feudalism but let chivalry swell

He did have a nemesis, though, for a time  
Archbishop Becket who died on his dime

And Henry had sons, Richard and John  
the latter who was usurped and forced to sign on

To the great Magna Carta from which our laws evolved  
including representatives and trials to be solved

I urge you to read on and study as you must  
the glorious rest of this historic rust

Alas, we edge forward to the recordings of words  
in sermons and rhymes that come not in thirds

But in iambic pentameter and ballads, I guess  
though ballads came later than Chaucer’s great mess

To make certain you know how literature grew  
I won’t attempt to taint what you knew

I will instead meander onward into my own  
imagination of Chaucer’s literary drone

I will write in his style though clearly much worse  
but what’s one to care as there’s even worse verse

Traversing from history to literature, which is fun  
I share a new story about an old fight t’was won

About a man and a beast and a chivalrous endeavor  
The man beat the beast in an unlikely manner

More I shall tell you if you make yourself warm  
and rest your left mind and invoke only charm

Here is a succinct Arthurian tale  
about a particular fight between a man and a snail

"But why a small, silly snail?" you may say  
Well, it's a creature whose time is both then and today

Its haughtiness has been revered and extolled and reviled  
by the rich and the poor and the aptly beguiled

It's an animal so soft and then bam! very splat  
which functions as metaphor for mankind who is daft

It is also a motif as advanced as the ages  
from before William Shakespeare put his voice on the stages

And even before Chaucer graced his incomplete page  
with rhymes instead of alliteration for the young hearty sage

The snail is a symbol of all that is weak  
yet strong in his ability to be ever in peak

To sustain through the years  
like red wine and bright cheer

Like the roots of an oak and the branches of asp  
except not in individual form just like that

More like a collaborative legacy has the snail  
with each one adding to the overall scale

Dying in a flash like every good writer  
leaving in its wake the soft residue of the fighter.

#### The Snail Fighter's Tale

The man set on down to put on his shoes  
to set off to see her, to give her the news

That King Arthur has asked him to work in his garden  
to tend to the arbors whose boughs were forgotten

He laid down his booties, not noticing him there  
this yellowy creature right next to his chair

He thought not much of it and continued to tie  
while thinking of nothing but her temperament shy

He anticipated her serenity as he approached her broad door  
as he bowed before her and asked her to explore

A courtship so fine, as no other she'd known  
He couldn't wait to see if she'd approve of his tone

But while he was dreaming about her in fine weather  
the creature moved sideways and onto his leather

He ambled right onto the part that's now tongue  
and refused to budge off despite being slung

The man couldn't get the snail off of his boot  
He tried and he tried, but the effort was moot

Now he was late and she wouldn't be tolerant  
of a bloke without time to be present and moderate

The testing of his patience was next on the list  
after sitting and tying and slinging his fist

If he could pass it, he just might prove worthy  
of courtship and marriage with this woman so girthy

He sat and he waited and he watched and he whistled  
He twiddled his fingers and counted the thistles

He stared down the exo-shell of this almighty wizard  
who stood stubbornly between this man and his vision

Finally, after a spell he laid prayer  
to the omniscient leader he'd hoped might dwell near

Now, if it was Jesus or just the snail's hunger  
that urged the snail off of his boot-numbing slumber

No one will know, but I can say for certain  
that when he got there, she threw open her curtains

She played no notice of either tardiness or haste  
She claimed the belief that love shouldn't go to waste

But really she noticed on his boot some soft slime  
that the man had not seen as the sun made him blind

Apparently upon leaving, the man and the snail,  
the snail moved too slowly, and well you know the drill

The man had not known what knightly deed he had done;  
all that he noticed was her heart he had won

Also, he knew that he was grateful for work  
of jousting with snails in Arthur's garden in York

When he was working, he sang this fine tune  
Please sing along if you've a penchant to croon:

I've been working on the snail code  
All the live-long day

I've been working on the snail code  
Just to pass the time away

Can't you smell the thistle blowing and  
rising up biennial in the yard?

Can't you see the garden growing  
when the snail shells are no longer hard?

Snail, won't you go,  
Snail, won't you go,  
Snail, won't you go away –ay –ay?

Snail, won't you go,  
Snail, won't you go,  
Snail, won't you go away?

Garden won't you grow,  
Garden, won't you grow  
Garden, won't you grow –ow –ow –ow –ow?

Garden won't you grow,  
Garden, won't you grow  
Garden, won't you grow my way?

#### The Teacher's Epilogue

I play for you an instrument from way before Chaucer  
right beside melodies from after his proffers

I bless you with these not just to flank  
but to help you remember my own lowly rank

We are all like him and like us and like me  
We are all on a pilgrimage to be both fettered and free

To serve others including our own guilty pleasures  
and to bestow upon the heavens His and our earthly treasures

I hope you've enjoyed this edifying turn  
for in teaching it to you, it is I who have learned.